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Chairman: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Outline of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (A/55/7/Add.10 and A/55/797)

1. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General containing the outline of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (A/55/797), recalled that the General Assembly, in its decision 53/411 B of 18 December 1998, had endorsed the revised administrative arrangements for the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (ITC) as set out in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/53/7/Add.3). The report of the Secretary-General set out the budget outline of ITC, with the requirements expressed in Swiss francs, in line with the new arrangements. The outline would be submitted simultaneously to the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration of the World Trade Organization (WTO) for its approval.

2. The table contained in paragraph 6 of the report showed the requirements for the biennium 2002-2003, which represented an increase of 3.7 per cent in real terms. A substantial part of that increase would fund an annual meeting of the Executive Forum, an event designed to strengthen the capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to formulate and manage national export strategies. Another substantial part of the increase would strengthen the in-house expertise of ITC in electronic trade, which was becoming an increasingly critical factor in any national export development strategy.

3. The detailed proposed programme budget of ITC for the biennium 2002-2003 would be submitted to the General Assembly and to the General Council of WTO in the autumn of 2001, on the basis of the decisions that the Assembly would have taken on the current outline as well as the reaction received from the WTO Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration.

4. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report (A/55/7/Add.10), said that the Committee recommended approval of the budget outline for ITC. The Committee noted that the proposed outline represented an increase of 3.7 per cent in real terms and that regular budget resources would be used in the preparation of the substantive elements related to the Forum, while extrabudgetary funds would continue to be used to fund the travel of participants from least developed countries and to ensure dissemination of the experience at the national level. The Advisory Committee might offer additional comments, as necessary, when it received the definitive report of the Secretary-General at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

5. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) noted with satisfaction that the Advisory Committee had reviewed the budget outline with ITC representatives in Geneva, through videoconferencing. The practice of videoconferencing should be continued and adopted by other bodies, including the Fifth Committee.

6. With regard to the procedure being followed, he wondered whether the Committee was approving the outline of budget proposals that had already been officially submitted. He noted, furthermore, that the proposed increase of 3.7 per cent was mainly to fund an annual meeting of the Executive Forum and to strengthen the in-house expertise of ITC in electronic trade. The Secretariat should elaborate on what was meant by strengthening the in-house expertise of ITC.

7. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division), with reference to the procedure being followed, said that the detailed budget fascicle for ITC had not yet been prepared. What existed was a preliminary estimate of the total amount. The detailed budget proposals would be submitted at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly after the Assembly and WTO had approved the outline. The in-house expertise of ITC was likely to be strengthened through the creation of two additional posts, at the P-5 and General Service levels. The details were still to be finalized with the parties concerned.

8. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had held several videoconferences and planned to continue such meetings. With regard to the procedure being followed, there was no difference between the current procedure

and the one that had been followed at the Assembly's fifty-fourth session. The reference to the procedure used at the fifty-fourth session was contained in the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/7, paras. IV.59-IV.61).

9. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed his delegation's satisfaction at the two meetings that had been held thus far to strengthen the capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to formulate and manage national export strategies. It also welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Assembly should approve the budget outline for ITC. In keeping with Assembly resolution 55/222, however, the recommendation should have been highlighted in bold print in the text so that it could be more easily located.

10. **Mr. Chandra** (India) supported the view expressed by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic that the recommendation should have been highlighted in bold print, since it was often the first thing that delegations looked for in the reports of the Advisory Committee. He hoped that the omission was not a harbinger of a change in that Committee's practice.

11. His delegation thanked the Government of Switzerland for funding the meetings and was pleased to learn that regular budget resources would be used in the preparation of the substantive elements related to the Forum. India had always stressed the need for all programmes to be funded from regular budget resources, because of the conditions that were frequently attached to extrabudgetary resources.

12. **The Chairman** proposed that the secretariat should prepare a draft decision for the consideration of the Committee by which the Committee would recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the report of the Secretary-General and of the outline of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO and that it concur with the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee thereon.

13. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation's position on the issue was well known to the Committee. While it would not stand in the way of the Committee's decision, his delegation would prefer the draft decision to state that the Assembly should "endorse" the recommendation and observations of the Advisory Committee.

14. **The Chairman** said that he had been informed by the secretariat that the draft text would be prepared in the usual manner.

15. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 122: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/RES/55/5 F)

16. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that the scale had been frozen for two scale periods and had been finalized only during the last quarter of 2000. While the issue had been exhaustively discussed within the Group of 77 and China, a common position had not yet emerged. Given the limited time that was available in the current part of the resumed session and the considerable ground that remained to be covered, the Committee might wish to defer its consideration of the item to the next part of the resumed fifty-fifth or to the main part of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

17. **Ms. Zonicle** (Bahamas) said that the proposal contained in paragraph 2 of Assembly resolution 55/5 F was of great concern to the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and she had been asked to reiterate that concern to the Committee. CARICOM wished to see a scale that was fairer in terms of the methodology used. It would also be more cost effective to have an independent review of the elements of that methodology before the Committee on Contributions submitted its proposals. She, however, saw merit in the proposal by the representative of India that, in light of the other matters on the agenda, the Committee should have a more in-depth discussion of the question during the main part of the fifty-sixth session of the Assembly.

18. **The Chairman** proposed that the secretariat should be requested to prepare a draft decision for the consideration of the Committee in which the Committee would recommend to the General Assembly that it defer consideration of the question to the main part of its fifty-sixth session.

19. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 169: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*) (A/C.5/55/38 and Add.1)

20. **Mr. Gilpin** (Chief of the Contributions Service, Department of Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on information on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 55/235 and 55/236 (A/C.5/55/38 and Add.1), said that in resolutions 55/235 and 55/236 the Assembly had decided on the parameters of a new set of 10 levels for Member States for the financing of peacekeeping operations from 2001. The Assembly had also taken note of voluntary movements by a number of Member States to higher levels than indicated by the parameters spelled out in resolution 55/235. Paragraph 10 of resolution 55/235 set out the transition period for new contributors under the 2001-2003 scale. The resolution also provided for the Secretary-General to update the composition of the levels on a triennial basis. It was the Secretariat's understanding that changes in the list of least developed countries approved subsequent to the adoption of resolution 55/235 would be reflected in due course in the updated composition of levels for the triennium 2004-2006.

21. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that there was no need for the Committee to take a decision on the report since it had not been requested by the General Assembly.

22. **Mr. Nesser** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked what would be the implications of postponing consideration of the report. The European Union was prepared to take note of it at the current part of the session.

23. **The Chairman** inquired whether the European Union would object to the proposal not to take a decision on the report at the current stage.

24. **Mr. Nesser** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he would not object to the Committee considering the report at a later stage.

25. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would therefore make no recommendation to the General Assembly at the current stage.

Agenda item 116: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/55/928)

Proposed regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of officials other than Secretariat officials and experts on mission and regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of the Secretary-General

26. **Ms. Schmidt** (Chief of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of officials other than Secretariat officials and experts on mission and regulations governing the status, basic rights and duties of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/55/928. In paragraph 1 of its resolution 55/221, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to undertake consultations on the proposed regulations with the officials referred to in his report (A/54/695 and Corr.1) and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-fifth session. As requested, the Secretary-General had consulted with the Chairmen of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the International Law Commission (ILC) and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), as well as with the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

27. In paragraph 2 of the same resolution, the General Assembly had also requested additional information on whether the proposed regulations ensured the impartiality, neutrality, objectivity and accountability of the personnel concerned. The Assembly had not expressly requested consultations with the officials referred to in paragraph 1 (b) of the Secretary-General's previous report (A/54/695 and Corr.1), but the Secretary-General had consulted with the chairperson of the group of special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights since the group had provided comments during the preparation of the earlier report. The comments received from the five officials were quoted in the report before the Committee.

28. **Mr. Rashkow** (Director of the General Legal Division, Office of Legal Affairs) pointed out that comments had not yet been received from the group of special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human

Rights regarding experts on mission, since the group would not meet until June.

29. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that delegations had just received the document and had not had sufficient time to read it. Informal consultations on the report should therefore be scheduled.

30. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation also regretted that the report had just been received, as it would be important for delegations to consult their capitals for instructions. With regard to paragraph 20 of the report, the Secretariat should comment on how specifically the impartiality, neutrality, objectivity and accountability of the officials concerned would be ensured. The question of whether experts on mission would be exempted from the proposed regulations so as not to jeopardize their independence should also be clarified.

31. **Mr. Gruzdev** (Russian Federation) said that, like the delegations of the Syrian Arab Republic and Cuba, his delegation was not prepared to speak on the matter at the current meeting, but reserved the right to return to the subject during the informal consultations.

32. **Mr. Orr** (Canada), supported by **Mr. Dugan** (United States of America), said that the Secretary-General had been unable to answer fully the request from the General Assembly. His delegation would therefore be reluctant to consider the document further until the group of special rapporteurs had met. No action should be taken and consideration of the report should be deferred to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

33. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that the resolution had not requested consultation with experts on mission. Clarification of paragraph 20 of the report and of the question of whether those experts would be exempted from the proposed regulations was needed before the Committee could decide whether the item should be deferred.

34. **Mr. Rashkow** (Director of the General Legal Division, Office of Legal Affairs) said that experts on mission would not be exempt. They were in the category of officials covered by the proposal and their obligations would thus be brought into line with those of Secretariat officials, as noted in paragraph 18 of the report. Furthermore, such experts had been included in a previous draft of the regulations and had been consulted in the preparation of the Secretary-General's previous report.

35. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the decision to defer consideration of the report was not entirely procedural. He would prefer to discuss the matter with the Secretariat in informal consultations before making that decision.

36. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that his delegation would like the opportunity to make substantive comments on the report during a formal meeting. Given that the report seemed to be incomplete, he did not see the value of taking any action other than deferring its consideration to a later session.

37. **The Chairman** said that there were two proposals before the Committee. The first was to defer consideration of the item to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly and the second was for the Committee to consider it later in the current week in either a formal or an informal meeting.

38. **Mr. Dugan** (United States of America) said that even a meeting later that week would be a constraint, since it would leave little time for informal consultations on the issue. The wisest course of action might therefore be to defer its consideration to the fifty-sixth session of the Assembly.

39. **Mr. Abdalla** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) supported the Chairman's proposal, which met the concerns of all delegations.

40. **Mr. Dugan** (United States of America) said that he would not object to a meeting if the Chairman thought it necessary.

41. **The Chairman** said that the Committee might very well decide at the meeting to defer consideration of the item.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.